

Your Guide to Low Impact Developments in Greater Grand Rapids

Sylvan Learning Center

3910 Burton S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan



History

When the Sylvan Learning Center in Grand Rapids planned to expand their facility, they wanted to make the building as green and healthy as possible to enhance the learning that takes place there, and to make it a healthy and pleasant place for the staff. They felt because it was an educational facility, going green was the right thing to do. They liked the idea of managing storm water on the site with rain gardens, as they would be part of the landscaping and would enhance the grounds with natural beauty.

LID Features

The front of the building is a showcase for rain gardens, planted with mature native plants, trees, and shrubs. The front rain garden takes water from the roof through underground tiles. The back rain garden gathers parking lot water (the lot was redesigned to deliver water to the rain garden), and was planted with a low-growing prairie seed mix. To ensure proper function and maintenance of the facility, an underdrain and drain cleanout were installed. Tree islands were not bermed, but were instead designed to collect water during rain. Native plant species, which require less care, were used throughout the property. Existing large trees were preserved.

Other Green Features

The building is LEED®-certified and features low volatile organic compound paints; energy efficient lighting, heating and cooling; recycled materials; cork flooring; clean air handling; non-toxic adhesives; non-toxic soybean insulation; and many other green features.

Sylvan Learning Center

Grand Rapids, Michigan
2005

LID Features

Rain gardens

Site redesigned for storm
water management

Building Features

LEED®-certified

Design, Construction

Malone Management
Company

Landscaping

Stout Creek Landscaping



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Social and Economic Benefits

The rain gardens provide a space to relax, explore, and enjoy native plants and flowers. Paths are provided to encourage people to interact with them. They provide beautiful views from the windows of the building and present an attractive and welcoming landscape to customers, traffic, and pedestrians on Burton Street. The rain gardens reduce the volume of storm water flowing into the Grand Rapids storm drains, which helps protect Plaster Creek, the destination of storm water in this area. They require less water and care than conventional landscaping.



LID Lessons Learned

Since it takes several years for prairies to mature from seed, a cover crop was needed to prevent erosion. Some annual flowers seeded in the area made the garden look more attractive as the prairie became established. Flowering plants in the front rain garden gave a great first impression in a short time.



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